# Pets and Domestic Violence: Insufficient Recognition Puts Victims at Risk in Australia



**Pets and Domestic Violence: A Pressing Issue in Australia**

Advocates highlight that pets are often abused or used as leverage to control victims in domestic violence situations. Despite this being a significant risk factor, it remains insufficiently recognized by police and governmental bodies. Emergency accommodations frequently do not accept animals, putting pets at risk of abuse if left behind.

Sarah\*, a victim of domestic violence, received a distressing image of her dog from her estranged husband. The abuse and threats had escalated to the point where she feared for her and her children’s lives. Struggling with inadequate support, Sarah faced issues with finding pet-friendly accommodation while seeking safety.

In Australia, there is a stark inconsistency in shelters' policies regarding pets. For instance, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory do not cater to pets in crisis accommodations. In New South Wales, only some refuges allow pets, while in Queensland, only one out of 54 crisis centers accommodates pets. Western Australia and Victoria also show similar disparities in pet-friendly shelters.

The issue of limited pet-friendly accommodations extends beyond urban areas, affecting rural victims who may find support harder to access due to the close-knit nature of these communities. Advocates and organizations like Lucy's Project call for more funding, training, and resources to improve responses to animal abuse in the context of domestic violence.

The RSPCA also emphasizes the need for acknowledging animal abuse in bail applications and coercive control legislations. They advocate for better training for police to handle situations involving pets, as this is often a crucial factor for victims deciding to flee abusive environments.

\*Sarah is a pseudonym used to protect the identity of the victim.